



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2015

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## **MEMPHIS, MHA, HUD LAUNCH DIGITAL INCLUSION PROGRAM THAT WILL CONNECT 4,500 LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS TO THE INTERNET**

### ***ConnectHome Pilot Project Will Bring High-Speed Internet, Technology Education to Families in HUD-Assisted Housing***

**MEMPHIS, TN** – Today, Memphis kicked off a program to connect children and families in HUD-assisted housing to high-speed internet. Called ConnectHome, this pilot program will accelerate broadband adoption and narrow the digital divide by addressing various barriers to broadband access, including the costs associated with high-speed service and electronic devices, and the need to provide residents with training in digital literacy.

Since 2009, the private and public sectors have invested more than \$260 billion into new broadband infrastructure, and three in four Americans now use broadband at home. Despite this significant progress, one in four American families still don't access the internet at home, particularly lower-income families with children.

In Memphis, 32 percent of public housing residents do not have internet access in their homes.

"Getting internet access and computers into the homes of our lower-income families will improve their quality of life significantly," Mayor A C Wharton said. "Some of the many ways Project ConnectHome will help include: supporting school initiatives that provide students with computers they can take home by providing the internet access those devices require at home. It will help students with college readiness and filling out financial aid applications online. It will help adults increase their job skills and attainment, which will help decrease the unemployment rate. Additionally, it will help improve patient care and provide increased access to healthcare resources."

While nearly two-thirds of America's lowest-income households own a computer, less than half have a home internet subscription. HUD's ConnectHome initiative strives to ensure that students can access the same level of high-speed internet at home as in the classroom.

"America's challenge in this 21<sup>st</sup> century is to remain the world's undisputed land of opportunity," said HUD Secretary Julian Castro. "By expanding broadband adoption,

ConnectHome will provide the residents of Memphis with the same high-speed access to knowledge and opportunity that millions of people already enjoy."

The City of Memphis is partnering with several organizations including Memphis Housing Authority, Shelby County Schools, Southwest Tennessee Community College, AT&T, Comcast, EveryoneOn, HUD and the Greater Memphis IT Council.

"Since the launch of Internet Essentials in 2011, Comcast has made significant progress in closing the digital divide for families in Memphis," said Otha Brandon, Comcast.

"Mayor Wharton, the City of Memphis and local community leaders have been invaluable partners in connecting 4,000 low-income Memphis families to Internet Essentials, and we look forward to expanding the program and partnership through the ConnectHome initiative."

ConnectHome was launched in July 2015 in conjunction with the Obama Administration, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD), nonprofits EveryoneOn and U.S. Ignite, and local and national stakeholders. At the community-level, EveryoneOn is working with HUD to help coordinate involvement from public housing agencies, funders, Internet service providers, and community organizations that will ensure a holistic approach to internet adoption.

"Today, we kickoff the local-level work of ConnectHome. This launch, along with others across the country, will create the opportunity to connect hundreds of thousands of individuals. But, most importantly, local leaders are working to connect families, which is a vital component of ending the digital divide," said EveryoneOn Chief Executive Officer Zac Leverage. "We're excited to bring to bear our knowledge of home adoption to ensure this program is as successful as possible."

Here is the 2-year project timeline:

- Submit project plan to HUD by Oct. 30, 2015
- Begin computer training sessions at G. E. Patterson Housing Development November 9, 2015
- Deliver computers to G.E. Patterson residents November 9, 2015
- All G.E. Patterson units connected by December 30, 2015
- Begin connecting other public housing units January 2016
- At least 3,200 units connected by July 2016
- All 4,500 units to be connected by December 30, 2016
- Phase 2 of the project to connect low-income residents not living in public housing will begin in March 2016.

To learn more about these and other commitments, visit [www.everyoneon.org/connecthome](http://www.everyoneon.org/connecthome) or [connecthome.hud.gov](http://connecthome.hud.gov). In addition, you can follow #ConnectHome or social media to get the latest updates.

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